

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)

What is a TMDL?

As defined by EPA, a Total Maximum Daily Load, or "TMDL", is a calculation of the amount of a pollutant that a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards, and an allocation of that amount to the pollutants sources. Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act establishes the TMDL programs and the associated water quality standards.

The standards are set by the States, Territories and Tribes and they are used for identifying uses for water bodies (i.e. fishing, swimming or drinking). The scientific criteria to support the identified uses are also identified by the States, Territories and Tribes. A TMDL, being the sum of allowable loads for a certain pollutant from contributing nonpoint *and* point sources, can be considered the "pollution budget" for a given water body. A margin of safety is included in the calculation to ensure that the subject water body meets its designated uses including compensations for seasonal variability in water quality.